

Orinda Grove Development Rounds the Final Lap

A mix of housing, community recreation, open space, and offices for a harmonious transition between Downtown and Orindawoods

By Andy Scheck



The map above illustrates the site; the old and new location of the ball park, OUSD office, new retaining walls and also the position of the new access roads
Graphic Andy Scheck

In December 2003, JFK University at 8 Altairinda Rd. closed its doors and about 1,400 students left empty classrooms. Three months ago the City of Orinda moved out of trailers and into its new building at 22

Orinda Way, leaving an empty site behind. Only the nearby ball park is still in use by a variety of softball, baseball, soccer and other teams several times per week, but the field is no longer in prime condition.

Housing developer Pulte Homes, a Michigan-based company with an office in Pleasanton, presented last week the revised design for the 73 unit (65 detached and 8 attached) development named Orinda Grove to the Planning Commission. Scott Pacheco from Pulte presented the main elements of the projects and Shannon Allen, Project Manager with LSA Associates, which prepared the Environmental Impact Report (EIR), explained the draft EIR.

Orinda Grove, located on 8 Altairinda Rd, encompasses 14.2 acres. 11.1 acres are currently owned by the Orinda Union School District, which will keep 0.4 acre for an office building. The City of Orinda owns the remaining 3.1 acres; the city-owned ball park will be relocated closer to street and to the south west corner of the site and will remain as City property. The new ball park will replace the old school buildings and the old ballpark area will become housing.

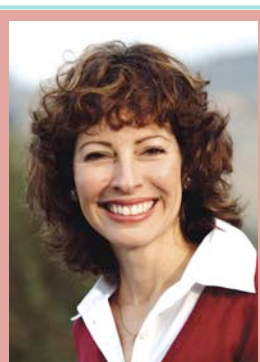
In the north, a cut into the existing slope will make room for seven residences and a series of retaining walls that will be between 140 and 200 feet from the east property line. These homes will be at an elevation of approximately 25 feet below the open space area at the northeast part of site. Retaining walls will be built in front of these homes between the structures and the open space area. The closest residential units to be constructed on the project site are over 250 feet away and 100 feet lower than the existing residences along "The Knoll" in the Orindawoods subdivision. The eight proposed duplex units will be designated as affordable housing units.

Most of the development will replace existing structures and only the very north and east part will develop what is now open space. The development will have at least 7 different housing styles with different design elements. Different colors will be used and the landscaping plan projects more than 500 new trees. The application also includes the removal of forty trees, five of which are protected oak trees.

For detailed information the Orinda Planning Department has posted the draft EIR and the staff report on their web site. <http://www.ci.orinda.ca.us/planning/pinegrove.htm>.

All documents are also available for review at the Orinda City Offices.

Deadline for comments is October 22, 2007. The next Planning Commission Meeting is October 9th.



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